BEYOND THE BINARY

AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST APPROACH TO STATE CYBER / SECURITY AND SURVEILLANCE
**UNDERSTANDING BINARY**

**binary noun**  
: something made of TWO (distinct) things or parts

: a division into TWO groups or classes that are considered diametrical (absolute) opposites

: a TWO-symbol system (usually 1s and 0s) used to write instructions (computer programming) and serves as the primary language for computers

// ... human sexuality is more complicated than the simple binary of "homosexuals" and "heterosexuals."  

-Ms

**&GENDER**  
: is the classification of gender into TWO distinct, opposite, and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine (based on a set of norms; e.g. social, cultural, or religious)

**THOSE WHO ARE INSULTED BY FEMININITY MUST BELIEVE BEING A WOMAN IS OFFENSIVE**

I'M NOT A JOKE  
DANIEL ARZOLA
cybersecurity is the state's response to online (cyber) threats (by malicious actors) to national (state) security.

these threats, malicious acts, occur in what is called 'CYBER SPACE'. cyber space is a magical place with cat videos - as well as home to the (often misunderstood) Dark Web; or Deep Web.

the Dark Web is home to what some might identify as unsavory activities, but it is also a safe place for people like activists and journalists.

on the Dark Web users are anonymous and unable to be identified. this also means their activities cannot be tracked; a point of tension for most state governments.

"Anonymity does not equate criminality, merely a desire for privacy," wrote Clare Gollnick and Emily Wilson, the authors of the Terbium study."
WHEN BINARY MEETS STATE CYBER-SECURITY

so, what happens when binary meets state cybersecurity? well, we get a very limited scope of what falls under the responsibility of cybersecurity and security at large. the scope typically includes the prevention of war or attacks on infrastructure, state intelligence, & capital systems (with consequence to those who live within the state).

Sri Lanka: shutting down social media to fight rumors hurts victims

As families gathered for Easter Sunday mass in Sri Lanka, a deadly coordinated attack targeted churches and hotels across the country. So far, this despicable and cowardly act has claimed the lives of 290 people and injured more than 500. In response to these attacks, the government has declared a state of emergency and introduced a 6:00 pm curfew, which was lifted today (Monday the 22nd). Authorities also blocked access to social media platforms, and the shutdown is ongoing.

Many reports indicate that the government banned social media platforms to stop rumors. According to a report from Al Jazeera, the Secretary to the President said, "The government decided to block all social media platforms in order to prevent incorrect and wrong information being spread." This shutdown is blocking people from using platforms including Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Viber, Snapchat, and Instagram. In its most recent update, NetBlocks reports that the TunnelBear Virtual Private Network (VPN) is also blocked.
INTERNET & PLATFORM SHUTDOWN

A binary approach to cybersecurity does not account for nuance that exists outside the binary. Internet shutdowns are done to protect the state & ensure control within the state; they fail to consider the needs of citizens & how citizens are impacted by a state’s decision to shutdown the internet or specific platform.

1

4 OUT OF 10 ADULTS HAVE EXPERIENCED ONLINE HARASSMENT

2

ONLINE HARASSMENT OF WOMEN*

"Digital harassment & threats directed at women differ than those experienced by men: they are misogynistic." - Elisa Lees Munoz

FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

1/3 OF WOMEN FROM THE UK, USA & NEW ZEALAND

NOTE

POLICE RESPONSE TO REPORTS OF ABUSE ONLINE WAS INADEQUATE
As a nonbinary trans femme, I present a problem not easily resolved by the algorithm of the security protocol.

-Sasha Costanza-Chock

the line between protecting the state from malicious actors via the internet while not becoming one is very thin.

one way cybersecurity seeks to protect the state is by ensuring our technical systems are secure and safe. This means free from flaws in the code (yes, binary code) that could result in vulnerabilities, which in turn could be exploited by another state or outside bad actors.

ironically, the development of surveillance technologies (used by the state) can leave the state vulnerable. This is becoming an increasing issue with the development of more commercial surveillance tools.

in addition to vulnerabilities, citizens are at the mercy of binary structures that invade privacy and violate the same people the technologies are supposed to protect. what are the options to improve the relationship between state cybersecurity & surveillance?

"As a nonbinary trans femme, I present a problem not easily resolved by the algorithm of the security protocol."
HOW DO WE TRANSITION FROM A BINARY APPROACH TO CYBERSECURITY & SURVEILLANCE?

FEMINIST INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

feminist international relations provides an alternative to the traditional approach to international relations often fraught with aggression (war), masculine tendencies & patriarchy, and heteronormativity (binary).

feminist international relations offers an approach to international relations that incorporates the role of women, power, and the state; & better understand what women are assigned to & or barred from within the state.

incorporating more women into cybersecurity adds another layer of binary; it brings in women as a differential to men in cyber roles.

Dr. Dipti Tamang reveals through her work that the incorporation of gender into security does not mean the inclusion of a feminist perspective nor does it address the existing power imbalance.9

Ann Tickner (who laid the foundation for feminist IR) notes that marginalization is common in international politics & commonly a result of "power difference."10
Feminist Approach to State Cyber / Security & Surveillance

security is based on binary structures. Computers are based on binary, therefore cybersecurity is based on two structures of binary.

A binary approach to cybersecurity means many are still left vulnerable. The binary does not account for nuance that exists outside the binary and the non-binary.

The binary infringes on (and asserts power over the) rights of women* and folx who exist outside of the defined binary of the state.

An intersectional feminist approach to security considers the role of power, privilege, oppression, & other

Factors in relation to how an individual (and or group) is impacted by security action.

An intersectional feminist approach to security is about identifying the oppressed, and those who exist beyond the binary, online & offline in parallel.

Moving beyond the binary offers an approach to cyber / security with the aim to identify security consequences of selected tools and add complexity where complexity needs to be added.
"Indeed, regimes of surveillance are particularly important in shaping the embodied gendered dynamics of urban life."

-Shoshana Magnet

- Access Now
- Amnesty International
- Citizen Lab
- Equality Labs
- Freedom of the Press
- Digital Rights Pakistan
- SMEX
- Tactical Tech
- WITNESS
this zine was created for an assignment focused on 'where are the women' for Feminist International Relations (taught by Dr. Denise Horn) as part of my Master in Public Policy (MPP) program at Simmons University, Cambridge, MA.

the plan is to keep iterating on this concept by digging deeper into several of the ideas presented in this zine; and offer a revised and more robust version of this zine in the fall of 2019. stay tuned.

"In the near future, troublesome women are marked “noncompliant” and trucked off to a space age Auxiliary Compliance Outpost – aka Bitch Planet.

/ As in our reality, most of the inmates are women of color."12 -The Guardian
ENDNOTES